

Background

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government strives to maintain a business-friendly environment that is favorable to the growth of all types of enterprises, whether small, medium or large. This is done by maintaining a simple, stable and low tax regime, as well as a flowing system of government policies and streamlining administrative procedures with minimum red-tape; by minimizing government intervention to the economy; and by providing an efficient infrastructure for business and other economic activities.

Nevertheless, all business activities in Hong Kong must operate in accordance with the statutory environmental requirements set out by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and other relevant departments of the Hong Kong SAR Government. As environmental issues are increasingly important, complying with environmental legislation and achieving good environmental performance have become not only pre-requisites of operating a business but also in some cases can be turned into business opportunities.

In Hong Kong, small and medium sized enterprises* (SMEs) are the backbone of the Hong Kong economy, comprising over 98% of business establishments and employing about 60% of the working population in the private sector**. However, SMEs often have limited resources in coping with today's business environment, not to mention the complexity and technicality of environmental legislation that may impose further obstacles to SMEs.

Understanding SMEs' constraints and difficulties, the Hong Kong SAR Government has been, under the framework of free market economy, providing numerous support services to help enterprises develop their potential. These support services can be broadly grouped under a number of major areas, namely, (a) business environment; (b) SME financing; (c) human resources; (d) technology applications; (e) market expansions; (f) information access; (g) quality support; (h) physical infrastructure; and (i) environmental support.

* According to the Trade and Industry Department, a SME means a manufacturing business which employs fewer than 100 persons in Hong Kong or a non-manufacturing business which employs fewer than 50 persons in Hong Kong.

** Data published by the Trade and Industry Department in June 2006

As far as environmental support is concerned, the Hong Kong SAR Government has established comprehensive, clear and transparent environmental legislation and requirements as well as has been providing state-of-the-art environmental infrastructure.

Even with the presence of the well-established legislation and infrastructure, business still have the important roles to play in environmental protection and they should be well aware of and take action to fulfill the environmental requirements. As such, EPD has taken the initiative to develop this user-friendly and concise guide so as to help business realize and effectively execute their environmental as well as corporate and social responsibilities.

What does this Guide Aim at and How can it Help you?

The purpose of this Guide is to provide a clear explanation and consistent interpretation of the regulatory requirements and infrastructure provision on environmental protection in Hong Kong. Hence, it aims to facilitate trades and industries in ensuring that their business are operated in full compliance or even beyond compliance with the environmental legislation. By walking through this Guide, you will learn what environmental compliance requires and how this can be integrated into your daily business operation without causing much disturbance.

While this Guide is mainly targeted to SMEs, the information contained in this Guide is also applicable and useful to large organizations.

How to Use this Guide?

Design and Structure of the Guide

This Guide has been prepared from the business' perspective, with a view to helping readers understand the basic environmental requirements and infrastructure relevant to the different stages of a typical business cycle.

A comprehensive overview and highlights on the key environmental information are presented in the following Sections of this Guide:

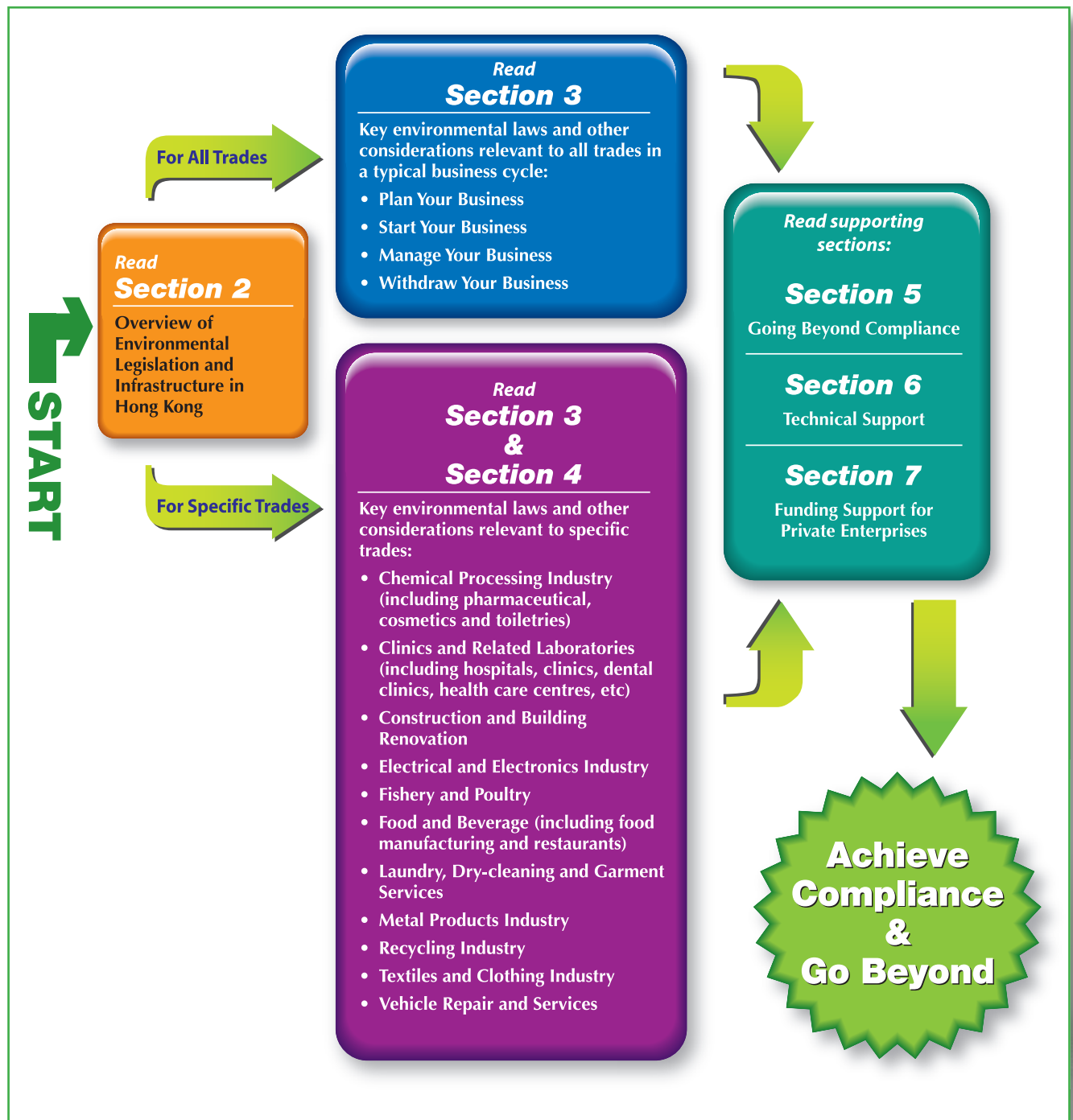
- **Section 2** provides a brief introduction to the environmental legislation and infrastructure in Hong Kong.
- **Section 3** provides the generic requirements which are commonly applicable to all trades and industries according to the phases of a typical business cycle, namely Plan, Start, Manage and Withdraw your business in Hong Kong.
- **Section 4** provides the specific requirements which are applicable to specific trades and industries only in addition to the generic requirements stated in Section 3.
- **Section 5** provides the environmental requirements that go beyond compliance.



A more detailed version of this guide (i.e. more elaborated Sections 6, 7 and a new Section 8 and Appendix H) can be found in the CD-ROM version or on line at the EPD's website www.epd.gov.hk.

Roadmap on Using the Guide

A roadmap illustrating on how to use this Guide is shown as follows:



Navigation Tips

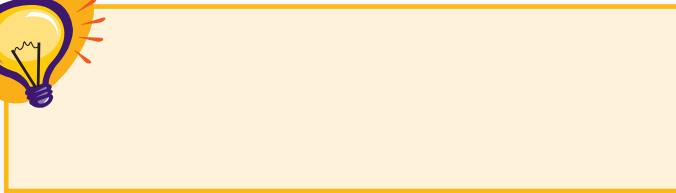
Appropriate visual aids are used to highlight and categorize relevant information in order to facilitate effective reading. The following Information Boxes are adopted throughout the Guide to denote specific characteristics of that information:

Type of Information Box

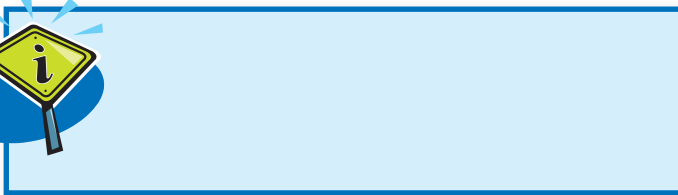
Characteristics of Information



This box type denotes statutory requirements that readers must be aware of and must comply with.



This box type denotes non-statutory requirements which are useful and good for reference purpose. Examples of these information include tips, best practices, Do and Don't, etc.



This box type denotes useful facts or data for information purpose.



Further Reading

This box type denotes the reference documents for further reading which are listed in Appendix H (in CD-ROM ONLY).

How to Obtain Useful References?

Supported by a comprehensive and transparent legal system in Hong Kong, trades and industries can obtain information on environmental laws and relevant guidelines through a number of channels. These include:

- Department of Justice's On-line Bilingual Laws Information System (BLIS) of Hong Kong (www.legislation.gov.hk)
- Guidance and reference materials published by the relevant government bureaux and departments such as Environmental Protection Department, Trade and Industry Department, Planning Department, Drainage Services Department, etc.

A wide range of other support resources in relation to operating business in Hong Kong are also provided by various government departments and other organizations such as Trade and Industry Department, Invest Hong Kong, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, etc.

